

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A nut composition provided with an edible coating, which comprises:

a nut, and

a layer of coating for said nut that comprises an edible film, said film comprising an edible compound selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC), maltodextrin (MD), a lipid or a combination of various lipids, and their mixtures.

2. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, in which said nut is selected from the group consisting of hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts, peanuts, pistachios, pine nuts, macadamia nuts, pecan nuts, raisins, cocoa beans, cashews, chestnuts, extruded cereals, and soybean derivatives.

3. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, wherein said nut is either whole or chopped.

4. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, wherein said edible compound is selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC) and their mixtures.

5. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, in which said edible compound comprises a mixture of acacia gum (AG) and maltodextrin (MD).

6. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, wherein said edible compound comprises a mixture of (i) a cellulose ether selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC),

carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC) and their mixtures, and (ii) acacia gum (AG).

7. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, in which said edible compound comprises a mixture of (i) a cellulose ether selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC) and their mixtures, and (ii) a lipid or a combination of various lipids.

8. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, wherein said edible film further comprises a protein.

9. (Currently amended) The nut composition according to claim 1, which comprises between 0.05% and 4%, ~~preferably between 0.05 and 2% by weight~~, expressed in dry weight in relation to the total weight of the nut coated with said edible compound.

10. (Currently amended) The nut composition according to claim 1, in which the thickness of the coating layer of said nut, which comprises an edible film, ranges from 5 µm to 1 mm, ~~preferably, 10–200 µm~~.

11. (Previously presented) The nut composition according to claim 1, which further comprises an additive selected from the group consisting of plasticizers, antioxidants, functional and/or bioactive or nutraceutical components, colours, aromas, flavour boosters, sweeteners, polishes, and their mixtures.

12. (Previously presented) A method for producing a nut coated with an edible coating according to claim 1, which comprises the steps of:

- a) applying a filmogenic solution that comprises an edible compound selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxy propyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC),

ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC), maltodextrin (MD), a lipid or a combination of various lipids, and their mixtures, on the surface of a nut to be coated; and

- b) drying the filmogenic solution deposited on the surface of said nut to be coated.

13. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said filmogenic solution comprises an edible compound selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC) and their mixtures.

14. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said edible compound comprises a mixture of acacia gum (AG) and maltodextrin (MD).

15. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said edible compound comprises a mixture of (i) cellulose ether selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC), and their mixtures, and (ii) acacia gum (AG).

16. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said edible compound comprises a mixture of (i) cellulose ether selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC), and their mixtures, and (ii) a lipid or a combination of various lipids.

17. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said filmogenic solution further comprises a protein.

18. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said filmogenic solution comprises one or more edible compounds in a concentration between 1% - 50% by weight.

19. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 18, wherein said filmogenic solution comprises an edible compound selected from the group consisting of hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropyl cellulose (HPC), methyl cellulose (MC), carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), ethylmethyl cellulose (EMC), and their mixtures, in a concentration between 1% and 20% by weight, ~~preferably, between 2% – 14% by weight.~~

20. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein said filmogenic solution is applied on the nut to be coated in a rotary drum by dripping or spraying.

21. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein the quantity of edible compound present on the coated nut, expressed in dry weight in relation to the total weight of the coated nut lies between 0.05 and 4% by weight, ~~preferably between 0.05 – 2% by weight.~~

22. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein the drying of said filmogenic solution deposited on said nut to be coated is done with air at a temperature equal to or lower than 200 °C, ~~preferably at a temperature equal to or lower than 110 °C.~~

23. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, in which the drying of said filmogenic solution deposited on said nut to be coated comprises the addition of a compound in powder form, selected from the group consisting of an edible polysaccharide, an edible lipid, an edible protein, and their mixtures, the same as or different from the edible compounds present in the filmogenic solution.

24. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, in which the drying of said filmogenic solution deposited on said nut to be coated is done in a rotary drum by means of a blower.

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25. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, in which the drying of said filmogenic solution deposited on said nut is done in a drying tunnel, air-conditioned chamber, oven or kiln.

26. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, in which the drying of said filmogenic solution deposited on said nut is done in a drying tunnel that comprises the following areas:

- 1) hot air drying;
- 2) infra-red lamp radiation drying; and
- 3) cold air cooling.

27. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, which comprises repeating a variable number of times the stages involved in the application (stage a) and drying (stage b) of the filmogenic solution.

28. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein layers are formed which are the same or different.

29. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, which comprises the inclusion of one or more additives to said filmogenic solution.

30. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 12, which further comprises the addition of one or more additives to said coated nut.

31. (Previously presented) A derivative of a nut which comprises a nut coated according to claim 1, and, further comprises an additional coating selected from the group consisting of sugar, honey, salt and chocolate, which covers said coated nut.

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32. (Previously presented) A derivative of a nut which comprises a nut obtainable by means of the method according to claim 12, and further comprises an additional coating selected from the group consisting of sugar, honey, salt and chocolate, which covers said coated nut.